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23 July 1979

# Near East/North Africa Report

(FOUO 30/79)



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## NEAR EAST/NORTH AFRICA REPORT

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INTER-ARAB AFFAIRS

NO OBSTACLES TO UNITY, HAMMADI DECLARES

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 25-31 May 79 pp 28-29

[Interview with Dr Sa'dun Hammadi, Iraqi Minister of Foreign Affairs, author unknown: "Syrian-Iraqi Unity Enters the Phase of Discussing Party Unity and the Form of Federation"]

[Text] Our interview with Dr Hammadi was not a diplomatic one. He wanted to lay it on the line and stated his country's position regarding sensitive and important current Arab issues in a frankness seldom adopted by an Arab official.

Fez, from our correspondent:

The conference of foreign ministers of Islamic countries in this city known for its Islamic character was one of the most successful conferences demonstrating Arab solidarity with their Muslim brothers in facing the great issues which concern the Arab and Muslim worlds.

The Arab cause dominated the conference resolutions, which stressed that just peace will not prevail in the Arab world except through complete withdrawal and giving the Palestinian people their full rights, including the right to self determination and establishing their independent state in Palestine. The conference also condemned the U.S. role and its efforts to gain support for the Camp David accords and President Sadat's treaty with Israel, through cajoling or threatening Arabs. The suspension of the Sadat regime's membership was a punitive measure expressing the censure of 600 million Moslems of Sadat's surrender of the holiest of their holy places, their land and Jerusalem.

The Conference's interest in Jerusalem, the second holy city in Islam, is demonstrated by formation of a special committee, headed by King Hassan II of Morocco, to carry out a political and informative program on a worldwide scale to assert the city's Islamic and Arab character.

Dr Hammadi headed his country's delegation to the conference. We interviewed him on this occasion, discussing the following questions:

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[Question] How do you assess the results of the 10th Conference of Islamic Foreign Ministers?

[Answer] The results have been positive, the program sound, everything went as well as one could possibly wish and the session was a step forward in developing the conference's cultural, economic, political and social institutions.

The resolution suspending Egypt's membership is in keeping with the conference principles. It was the last important resolution adopted, and its significance lies in the fact that it is an international resolution larger than the Arab world. It expressed the Islamic opinion in the Egyptian-Israeli treaty and in what Sadat has done.

From now on, no one can say that the Islamic public opinion regarding the Camp David accords or President Sadat's treaty with Israel is unknown. The resolutions will serve as a starting point to expand the campaign to isolate Sadat's regime in the future.

I did not notice any axes in the conference. There were some little differences around secondary matters which is normal in such meetings. There were no real conflicts.

True, the Arab countries initiated Egypt's isolation; however, the other nations followed suit. Some non-Arab countries such as Pakistan and Iran were just as enthusiastic as the Arabs regarding the measures.

[Question] You have said lately that Jerusalem cannot be regained by diplomatic means, are we to understand that its recovery cannot be realized except through war?

[Answer] I believe that the whole Arab-Zionist conflict can be solved only by the Arab's own power. We are certain that Israel understands only the language of force. Jerusalem can be regained either by war or potential war which Israel would lose. This is what can help to reach a just solution.

[Question] There has lately been talk of returning the Middle East problem to the UN. Is there agreement among the Arab countries which attended the Baghdad Summit to submit the Palestinian problem to a special UN session?

[Answer] There was no voting on such a matter. However, I believe that all Arab countries favor a special UN session to deal with the Palestinian problem.

[Question] With regard to the Gulf, do you think the United States is capable of creating events which would justify its intervention? What is Egypt's role in such a matter?

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[Answer] I believe that with the downfall of the Shah's regime, it is much more difficult for the United States to stir up trouble in the Gulf states. Even when that regime was playing a protector role, it was not easy for the United States to do so because it knew that the reaction in the Gulf states would not be small. An aggression would not go unpunished.

Now the situation is more difficult and the United States will have to think longer than before. However, President Sadat, with the arrogance and irritation he is known for due to the opposition he encounters, the unexpected reactions and his own psychological circumstances will stir up trouble in the Gulf region, although he is going to fail.

[Question] You have recently visited Lebanon, do you see a possible solution to the crisis there?

[Answer] A successful solution may not agree 100 percent with the point of view of either side. It is a conciliatory solution and consequently should be pleasing to all parties, including other Arab countries. It should put an end to dealing with the Zionist enemy. It seems to me also that there is no objection to consulting with countries outside the Arab world and to seeking their approval and cooperation. Finally, the solution should include a program of economic aid to help Lebanon overcome its bad economic situation.

[Question] How do you see the course of conditions following the declaration of the renegade major Sa'd Haddad to the so-called "free Lebanon"?

[Answer] I cannot answer that. I have seen one positive indicator in my recent visit, namely, the antagonists are convinced that neither side can impose his point of view by military force.

This is a positive factor, which constitutes a good background for a solution. As long as one of the parties hopes for a military victory there is no way to reach a solution.

This is the only positive thing I have seen. Others are negative and are not encouraging.

[Question] Some observers believe that the obstacle to Iraqi-Syrian unity is lack of agreement over unifying the party.

[Answer] I have nothing to add to what I said on previous occasions. I do not know what creates this impression. It is probably psychological more than factual. It is as if there are those who believe that the Iraqi-Syrian unity should be achieved as soon as possible or as if there is wishful thinking of obstacles. Such great matters cannot be achieved in a short time.

I can say that there are no obstacles whatsoever. We are in a phase where



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each side is stating its point of view regarding two great problems, (1) unifying the party, (2) the form of the state. The latter requires a long time, particularly the writing of a constitution. Preparing an instrument embodying the organization of a cooperative requires several months.

[Question] You have visited Moroccan King Hassan II. What did you discuss together?

[Answer] The visit was a courtesy one, not for talks. However, I presented to his majesty our views on Arab conditions, particularly the Arab-Zionist struggle.

I discussed with his majesty the implementation of the Baghdad resolutions which we are working on and the Islamic Conference. His majesty gave me some information regarding the area of north-west Africa.

[Question] Is there anything new in the Iraqi position on the Sahara problem?

[Answer] We trust that it will be solved soon, within a framework approved by all parties.

[Question] It has been rumored that there are attempts to normalize Iraqi-Sudanese relations.

[Answer] I have no knowledge of such a thing.

[Question] Deterioration of relations between the two countries might have a negative effect on Iraqi support of the Eritrean revolution.

[Answer] This question should be addressed to the Sudan.

[Question] The Islamic Conference has discussed the problem of Islamic minorities oppressed in some countries. What is Iraq's position on this problem such as the Moro Liberation Front in the Philippines?

[Answer] We support the cultural and economic demands of Muslim societies all over the world. Also their demands for justice and equality. It is time to take into consideration Muslim minorities in other countries.

Islam is a great force in the world. It is a religion with a philosophy and culture which are worthy of respect. Since it respects other religions, the other religions and peoples should respect the Muslims and Islam.

We do not call for secessionist movements in countries with Muslim minorities. We do not believe in partitioning the world on a religious basis. However, we believe that the problem of Muslim minorities in the Philippines must be solved in a just way. It cannot be dealt with only with arms and by force.

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[Question] Do you think that relations between the Arab Socialist Ba'th Party and the Iraqi Communist Party have been severed completely? If this is true, what is the future of the National Front?

[Answer] The National Front lives. We have not expelled the Communist Party. If it wants to remain it can. However, it does not act internally and internationally as a friend and ally.

All we want and insist upon is the support of the charter and the spirit of the National Front. We ask others to do the same. Should the Communist Party abandon its old attitudes it would be welcome. We cannot accept as part of the National Front a political organization which is not committed to the Front's principles.

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INTER-ARAB AFFAIRS

IMPLICATIONS OF ARAB LEAGUE'S MOVE TO TUNIS ANALYZED

Paris JEUNE AFRIQUE in French 20 Jun 79 pp 69-70,72

[Article by Souhayr Belhassen]

[Text] After having moved from Cairo, the Arab League is to be installed in Tunis but not without problems. Only 80 officials reported to their positions on 26 May. In a few days, on 27 June, the Council of the League is supposed to elect the new secretary general at an extraordinary session; however, nothing has been set up.

In Tunis, in La Place de l'Afrique, the flags of 21 Arab countries are fluttering in the wind around the equestrian statue of Habib Bourguiba. They mark the presence of the Arab League in Tunis since 12 April at a time when the committee of six (Tunisia, Algeria, Kuwait, Syria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia), which is responsible for implementing the decisions of the Baghdad Conference, had begun its work. Four hundred foreign officials were expected in Tunis at the end of May where they were supposed to report to their positions. In a six-story building which contains 100 offices, located on the airport road, at the northern exit point of the capital.

Real estate companies and agencies were called upon to make a listing of dwellings suitable for housing 100 Arab families. This massive arrival was expected resolutely by the owners of villas who were making fantastic future plans!

From the university stenographer on down, everyone is a candidate for employment by the league and, for the first time, the Arabization of education is unanimously accepted. It is true that there are nearly 400 positions to be filled, not counting those reserved for non-Tunisians. One thousand officials and employees of an international organization: that is a figure which is of significance to an overpopulated city such as Tunis where it is increasingly difficult to drive and where the injection of a new salaried group will not take long to have inflationary effects.

Already prized by Tunisians, Tunis should enchant other Arabs. In the minds of many nationals, the gentle way of life and the seaside resorts

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will win over visitors who, were it not for the league, would never have come to Tunisia. "For the first time, economic policy and the idea of making Tunisia a Switzerland of the Arab world have become credible," a banker dreams aloud.

Those opposed to the leagues coming to Tunis are mixed couples the wives of which fear that an Arab presence will be too heavy! "There is already talk of replacing Sunday by Friday," says a concerned Frenchwoman who has always lived in Tunisia.

"The Arab League without Egypt is a purely theoretical concept! We cannot cross off 40 million Egyptians by a resolution, even if it is a summit resolution. The league's calling is to shine forth from Egypt," we are told by a law professor! As the result of this transfer, we are going to witness a long-winded or declared confrontation between moderate leaders and those of the steadfastness front, each of whom is going to pull the covers over his head with this mental reservation, profoundly anchored in most of those who opted for Tunisia, that this country is capable of nothing and will allow itself to be led by the strongest countries." As a matter of fact, it is known in Tunis that the Saudi intervention was decisive. It was Saudi Arabia which induced the Tunisian leaders to accept the league headquarters.

Moreover, diplomats accredited to Tunis agree in thinking that the charm shown by Algiers toward its neighbor to the east is designed to take Algeria out of its Maghrebian isolation and to make of it, in a way, the regional spokesman within the league, while consolidating the positions of the steadfastness front. Numerous are those who think that a transfer of the league to Tunis is provisional, that other countries, more experienced than Tunisia in inter-Arab problems, are better able to resolve them.

"The Arab League in Tunis is our revenge." One person out of two who was asked whether he was for or against the installation of the organization in the Tunisian capital had this conception of "turnabout is fair play". Tunisia is the only Arab country which has had conflicting relations inside the organization. At the outset, Bourguiba called for a choice of the egalitarian principle, a concept linked with the position occupied by Nasser and which, therefore, experienced all the mis-adventures of Nasserism.

Tunisia had barely joined the Arab League when it lodged a complaint against Egypt's interference in its affairs. On 13 October 1958, in its resolution 1948, the league rejected his complaint.

Since then, Tunisia has taken exception to Egypt's leadership which is seeking to impose its foreign policy options. And Bourguiba has not stopped expressing his hostility to such activities, often with brutal frankness. "Never," he explained on 13 September 1965, "have the Arabs more fiercely killed one another than since Egypt assumed the sacred mission of uniting them".

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More Troubles Than Positive Aspects

He has also refused on many occasions to participate in meetings of the league and renounced attending the Arab summit meetings in September 1964 and 1965. Opposed to the principle of "all or nothing" as regards the Palestinian problem, Bourguiba was banished from the Arab nation.

It was Iraq--where on 22 March 1979 the Baghdad summit chose Tunis as the Headquarters of the Arab League--which was most determined to heap criticism upon Tunisia and Bourguiba to the point that the latter renounced going there even though he was already at the Iraqi border.

The "turnabout is fair play" is also to be understood with respect to the West in the face of which there is no longer the "colonial" notion of an Maghreb and Mashiq. "Therefore, from now on," a professor of history said, "every time there is an option of destiny placed upon the Arab nation, the Maghreb will be associated with it in a direct and inescapable manner." "The league is coming to Tunis," he added. "Is this not proof that the Maghreb and Machrek are more than solitary, that they constitute a living organism. The Algerian, Moroccan and Tunisian nations are proud of this transfer. The Arab world has come to knock on their door!" This adherence to the league's coming to Tunis is general; however, it is not without nuances. And the most clearheaded individuals see in it more troubles and dangers for Tunisia than positive aspects.

The head of a department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, this diplomat is critical with respect to the "victory of Tunisia which does not honor the Arab world" since it is dedicated to its division. On the other hand, the hope which he shares with a number of his colleagues is that they may be able to go beyond the stage of Egyptian paternalism and keep only the qualitative option.

To put himself in a constructive, if not optimistic frame of mind, is also the objective of the minister of Foreign Affairs, Mohamed Fitouri, who expresses well the thought of those in favor of the transfer. "For a third of a century," he said, "the league was not able to meet the aspirations of the Arab citizen nor everything he expected of it. We must give him a new hope [esprit] which involves realism, moderation and perspicacity." According to him that requires "a modification and updating of the charter and regulations of the league."

The administrative apparatus, still according to the head of the Tunisian diplomatic sector, should aim at quality rather than quantity and should no longer endure the plethora of officials. Finally, if certain organizations duplicate the work of other international organizations, all the more reason to abolish them.

Tunisians, therefore, do not intend to cross their arms and let things happen. They intend to act in the sense of a rationalization of the league,

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so that the latter will no longer be dominated by words rather than action. There must be personnel changes; the spirit of the league will of necessity follow. A consequence, it is thought, which will not only be positive for the Arabs, but also for the North-South dialog.

#### Pretentious or Naive

This determination brings a smile to the lips of those who are convinced that the league will not last more than 3 years and who find Tunisians pretentious or naive.

"We have been unable to do anything at the Maghrebian level," I was told by a high official of the Maghrebian permanent consultative committee whose headquarters is in Tunis. "Let everyone learn to sweep his own stoop before attempting to take care of the housekeeping of others!"

How are Tunisia and the Tunisians going to handle an event which has such profound repercussions for the national conscience?

When for the first time there was talk about the transfer of the league in November 1978, the government reacted with reserve. Only Bourguiba could put forth a refusal (according to his familiars, this choice was not much to his liking). And facing up to the eventual feeling of frustration which probably followed that choice.

The government was wrong to hesitate. According to a communist, the League is a card in the government's hand which, responding to the Tunisian's desire for Arabness, satisfies a demand. "It is," he said, "an appeasement factor at the level of the country's domestic situation."

"At the point we now are, there is no doubt that the government and the party are going to be forced to integrate this new factor into their strategy," said a minister and member of the political bureau.

#### The Young People are Enthusiastic

There is nothing but the government and the Destourian Socialist Party. The supporters and, above all, the opponents of the government will try to tap this "new element" to their profit. That is why members of the opposition are generally in favor, even if the reasons differ.

"It is a setback for the policy of Westernization which the government has been conducting for 20 years. Whether it wants to or not, it will be forced to bring its Western positions back into balance, as the prisoner of its own Arab image and the fact that the Arab League is in Tunis," said a man of the left who goes further in his analysis: "The government is running risks to the degree that progressive Arab factions from now on are going to find points of support." It is possible, in fact, that one day the Tunisian mass media will report the inflamed revolutionary speeches

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which are made at times within the league and that personal contacts and the tracts will do the rest...

If the political class, the intelligentsia or the holders of the economic controls are divided over the advantages and disadvantages of the transfer, the young people are frankly enthusiastic.

"Those who thought that in the cradle of the Maghreb it would be possible to continue to live removed from this universe of conflicts are quite naive," said a young professor. "When the Arabs are sick, there is no oasis that is really spared. The sun and sand assume the responsibility for heating up and communicating the disease. That is how we come to the realization that the transparency of the Arab world is perfect and total from the Maghreb to the Mashriq."

Youthful lyricism erases differences and wipes out obstacles. "If Tunisia becomes the relay point for contradictions, opportunities and hopes of the Arab world, where is the harm in it?" a sociology student asks. "We were being moved backward away from the Arab world. Today, we are going to bask in our own light." And he added, "Tunisia experienced the Arab problem at the level of its fantasies, just as a living person thinks about Paradise."

In fact, this hope seems to constitute the personality of the Tunisian. If it does not, how are we to explain that Arab union and, beyond that, Arab unity have become a concrete problem in Tunisia to the point that the political class has to do something about it? The question has been posed. In a discreet manner in Kef in May 1973 when Boumediene proposed union to Bourguiba. And in a shattering manner in Jerba in January 1974. Today it is being posed in the country. And in the region. In one way or another, will the league act as a catalyst or a detonator? For the time being, some leaders think that the league can protect Tunisia against the excesses of neighboring Libya.

Tunisia-East: The Reconciliation

When questioning young people, whether they are students or unemployed persons, chaouch (orderlies) or bus drivers, teachers or waiters, we get the feeling that above and beyond the intellectual, tactical, operational and strategic options of the Bourguiba of decolonization, above and beyond the political and intellectual divisions, history is renewing the bond between Tunisia and the East.

"We are witnessing," said a young researcher for the CERES [?Center for Socialist Study, Research and Education], "the reconciliation which neither the sacrifice of the Moroccan soldiers at Golan nor the ideological and emotional verbiage of the Algeria of Ben Bella and Boumediene are sufficient to hamper [comblent]. The Arab consensus on the choice of Tunis gives proof that a deeper, more synthesizing experience, precisely that of the Tunisia of Bourguiba responds to this reconciliation and this rediscovered identity."

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The debate aroused among certain university students by the installation of the League in Tunis is interesting. To the degree that Tunisian society is perceived as a free society which is pursuing its destiny in a relaxed manner and which confronts new situations.

We think that if the government really permits dialog it will have to reconsider its parameters as a function of this major event and have an opportunity to digest it. Just like the adolescent who overcomes the negativism of his 18 years to embrace his definitive career as an adult and mature man, Tunisia, with this Arab dimension, would acquire its definitive identity. We would then close the Bourguibian parenthesis.

#### Managing the Crisis at Best

This is a simple and almost simplistic hypothesis since the generation which had made up its mind to divorce the East is still there. And it is this generation which is leading the country. Made up of the legitimate defenders of a certain Bourguiba, this generation proclaims its refusal to take the problematical Arab into its retrograde manifestations and regressive options.

A minister now in office, who is among the big names, becomes almost enraged: "The Arab countries are thinking of us because they cannot do anything else. Tunisia was chosen because the other countries were eliminated. At best we are going to manage a crisis. But at worst, we do not even know. We were strangers to the violence and demagogy which are shaking the Arab world. Now the Tunisian government is changing and, because of this, is presenting weaknesses which could be aggravated by foreign manipulations! In reality, we are allowing our heads to be turned by the foam which threatens to become a wave capable of carrying us away."

A PDG [expansion unknown] sees in it the loss of Tunisia's immunity: "We are going to trundle along the contradictions of the Arab world. Tunisia's metier is to maintain the balance between the African axes, the Arabs and the Mediterraneans. It is true that Bourguiba did rather direct it toward the West; however, is that a sufficient reason for us today to turn toward the Arab world?"

Therein lies the moral of the story. In the light of the transfer of the league, it seems that between the leadership class and the holders of power in general, on the one hand, and the mass of the rising generations, on the other hand, sensitivity to the essential problems is different.

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SHARI'AT-MADARI DESCRIBES HIS POLITICAL POSITION

Paris LE NOUVEL OBSERVATEUR in French 25 Jun-1 Jul 79 pp 43-44 LD

[Interview with Iranian Ayatollah Shari'at-Madari in Qom by Josette Alia:  
"The Mosques' Great Revenge"--date not specified]

[Excerpts] What was my reason for going to see Shari'at-Madari? Because the revolutionary celebrations are now over and the day of reckoning has come. Khomeyni's popularity is starting to fall. He is a strict Muslim and plans to apply a pure and difficult Islam which stirs up opposition not only among secular groups--which does not worry him--but also within the religious party. This internal opposition, which seems to be led by Shari'at-Madari, has a theological and political aspect.

The first main point on which opinions are divided is whether a member of the Shi'ite clergy can, without sinning, take a direct part in political action when Shi'ism regards all power as necessarily corrupting. This quarrel goes back many years (to 1905) and is dividing the Iranian clergy more than ever before. Some support Khomeyni's view that they cannot impose a real Islamic regime without directly exercising power. Others support Shari'at-Madari in fearing to soil their hands with politics. They must certainly inspire the people--but from the mosques.

Of course, this point of dogma has political implications. For example, at the present time people are fighting for or against the constituent assembly. Khomeyni is proposing that a council of "wise men" appointed by him should draft the constitution and then submit it to popular referendum. Sadeo Qotbzadeh, his political adviser, explained: A democratically elected Chamber of Deputies must be installed as soon as possible. Otherwise there is a danger of the revolution leading to a dictatorship, as has been the case in other countries. Therefore why waste time awaiting the deliberations of 200 constituent assembly members who will not give the country a legal government for a long time?" The secular groups and the moderate clergy reject this argument. They think that a referendum in such conditions would simply be a plebiscite for or against the Imam, and nobody doubts that he would be given full popular support for a text drawn up by him without any real discussion in the country.

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This is the first major difference of opinion which has arisen among the religious leaders for 4 months and it could have serious consequences. Shari'at-Madari, who supports the moderates, has just called on his party to demonstrate for a constituent assembly and hence against Khomeyni. Shari'at-Madari has a great deal of influence: the whole of Azerbaijan (including the 2 million Azerbaijanis in Teheran) following him. Is the war of the ayatollahs about to start?

"I decided that this demonstration should be canceled," Shari'at-Madari told us quietly, clasping his delicate white hands--bishop's hands. "You see"--he scratched his forehead underneath his turban--"there could be provocations and bloodshed. There are still too many disturbances in the country in Kordistan and Khuzestan." This statement caused astonishment. Has he been threatened? Is he giving way to pressure from Khomeyni? Has he changed his views on the constituent assembly? He smiled and his eyes sparkled behind his little black spectacles. No, he has not changed his views. Quite the reverse. If there is any attempt to force a referendum without previous elections he will refuse to take part in the vote and will call for a boycott. That says everything. The religious front will not be split and the war of the ayatollahs will not take place in the street next Friday. However, a trial of strength has begun behind the scenes in the mosques. Who will win?

The only important question is how far it is possible to go in an Iran which has just lived through 30 years of dictatorship and which is not prepared to abandon the freedom it has only just regained.

"The shah practiced populism without the people; now the imam is practicing populism with the people. That has a name: fascism," and Iranian intellectual told me. He believed in Khomeyni like everybody else until he came to power. The illusion lasted 1 week--a short spring. Now, after 4 months of Islamic revolution the secular left is already fighting with its back to the wall. But it is still fighting. A newspaper, KEYHAN, falls, taken from inside by an Islamic committee, but other clandestine newspapers immediately spring up. Women are banned from working as judges so women magistrates occupy the justice ministry and organize a sit-in until the minister gives way. However, this last resistance sometimes looks like courage without hope, which is reminiscent of Prague's final days before the Soviet normalization. The most active leftwing groups fear Islamic normalization and some are preparing to go back underground. During the recent disturbances in Khuzestan [number indistinct] Trotskyists, 17 trade union workers and later 40 Fedayeen were arrested. A young Trotskyist, who has known the Savak and the shah's prisons, told me "we are Khomeyni's first political prisoners. Our struggle has started again for...20 years."

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IRAQ

BRIEFS

MIRAGE DEAL--Paris, Jul 79--An Iraqi Mission led by the Defense Minister, 'Adnan Khayrallah, recently made a visit to France. Iraq was intending to order a further consignment of Mirage F-1 jets as well as the eventual purchase of the Mirage 2000. [Text] [Paris MONITEUR DE L'AERONAUTIQUE in French Jul 79 p 7]

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MAURITANIA

BOUSSEIF'S DEATH RESTORES BALANCE OF FORCES WITHIN CMSN

Paris JEUNE AFRIQUE in French 13 Jun 79 p 17

[Article by Abdelaziz Dahmani: "Fragile Rebalancing"]

[Text] The death of Prime Minister Admed Ould Bousseif, on Sunday 27 May (JEUNE AFRIQUE, No 961), led, on the following Sunday 3 June, to the resignation of Col Moustapha Ould Mohamed Saleck, chief of state and chairman of the Military Committee for National Safety (CMSN).

This departure had been in the air since 6 April, when the president actually lost authority. The tragic death of Bousseif only precipitated events, because Ould Saleck sought to exploit the situation to his benefit. Bousseif's successor, LtCol Mohamed Khouna Ould Heydala, minister of Defense, chosen by the CMSN on Thursday 31 May, found an opportunity there to reveal himself as the new strong man in the Mauritanian Government. One of his friends, LtCol Mohamed Mahmoud Ould Louly, a finance department officer and minister [of Civil Service, Higher Education and Vocational Training] since 10 July 1978, succeeded Ould Saleck in his dual functions. The new president, a native of Tidjikja, is reputed to be a good administrator. Lieutenant Colonel Heydala has formed a new 15-member government (compared with 16), including eight military men: Defense (retained by the prime minister), Interior, Plan and Fishing, Equipment and Transportation, Information and Telecommunications, Education, Youth and Sports. Permanency of the CMSN is ensured by LtCol Ahmed Salem Ould Sidi. Ahmedou Ould Abdallah retains Foreign Affairs and Yedali Ould Cheikh becomes minister of Justice. The new government is also marked by a restoration of ethnic balance.

Khouna Ould Heydala, 39 years old, born in a large tent in the Nouadhibou region, started his military career on 1 September 1962. He took training courses in France, at Saint Cyr Coetquidam and then at Saint Maixent, and he alternated in commands at Rosso, Bir Moghreïn and Zouerate (at the time of the POLISARIO [People's Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Rio de Oro] attacks).

The Zouerate attack, on 1 May 1977, was the first serious alert experienced by the Mauritanian Army. Khouna Ould Heydala came out of it increased in

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stature. We were able to say the following of him in JEUNE AFRIQUE, No 859 (24 June 1977): "In spite of his training at Saint Cyr, Khouna Heydala is still a pure product of the desert. He has to his credit a large number of prestigious actions that, if they are not known to the international press, are reported extensively in discussions under country tents or in the living room of city dwellers. That is where public opinion exalts its heroes or stigmatizes cowardly or ambiguous attitudes. Heydala is calm, even serene. The hinterland did not regard the Zouerate operation as a defeat, in spite of what might have been written."

A few months later, he was promoted to the grade of lieutenant colonel exceptionally. Nevertheless, a judge in the town of Atar sought to condemn him for "collusion with the POLISARIO," this man of the north some of whose relatives had joined the POLISARIO Front. The accusation raised an outcry and the whole army, from officers to troops, supported Heydala. Prestige also worked for him in succeeding Bousseif.

Heydala, who is surely the least political of the Mauritanian military, was appointed chief of staff after the 10 July 1978 coup d'etat. He was, however, one of the first to protest, with LtCol Ahmedou Ould Abdallah and Maj Maouia Ould Taya, against the methods of President Moustapha Ould Saleck. After the "second white coup d'etat," on 6 April 1979, he was appointed minister of Defense.

The death of Ould Bousseif restores balance to the force ratio within the CMSN between advocates of a moderate line and those in favor of a more committed line with regard to the POLISARIO. The appointment of Khouna Ould Heydala confirms this restoration of balance. This situation will not fail to give rise to pressure from all sides. Because each one will be tempted to make this unstable balance lean in his favor. Ever since 31 May, through the voice of its minister of Foreign Affairs, Ibrahim Hakim, the POLISARIO has been threatening to resume military drives against Mauritania.

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MOROCCO

PRIME MINISTER SAYS NOT ONE INCH OF SAHARA WILL BE CEDED

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 25-31 May 79 pp 24-26

[Interview with Maati Bouabid, the Moroccan prime minister, by Faris Bazzi: "Interview With Man of the Phase in Morocco; Maati Bouabid to AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI: We Have Great Hopes in Efforts of Africa's Wise Men but We Will Not Cede One Inch of Sahara; Rabat Is Committed to Baghdad Resolutions and Is in Full Agreement With Position of Arab States; No Negotiations With POLISARIO; We Are Prepared To Negotiate With Algeria on Border Violations and on Unity of Greater Maghreb; We Have Opened Dialogue With All Moroccan Factions but We Reject Blackmail"]

[Text] Rabat--Maati Bouabid, the prime minister, or the first minister--which is his official title in Morocco--has been able to attract attention to himself and to the accomplishments he has realized in a short period and AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI felt the urge to conduct this interview with him on the issues and problems preoccupying his mind, the mind of Morocco and of the Arabs under the present conditions.

They describe him here as "the man of the phase." The fact is that Maati Bouabid, the first minister, or the prime minister, came to power under exceptional internal and external conditions.

Morocco's struggle to emphasize its historical and legal right to its Sahara is going through conditions that require introducing fundamental changes on the strategy followed by Morocco so far. The defense burden, the development requirements and the world inflation crisis have been reflected in the country's economic and living conditions and have created some kind of social tension that requires to be dealt with urgently and in a sound manner.

Thus, King Hassan's choice fell more than 2 months ago on Maati Bouabid to become his first minister and to carry along with him the burdens of government and the responsibilities of dealing with the situation.

Maati Bouabid has engaged in political action and legal action as a lawyer for more than 20 years, and his positions have been inclined toward opposition. However, this has not prevented him from taking part in shouldering the official responsibility in recent years. He was one of the ministers in the former government of Ahmed Osman.

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The wisdom of the choice is evident in the fact that Bouabid possesses the quality that makes him fit to shoulder responsibility. This quality is his ability to embark on dialogue with the various political factions and with the unionist movement simultaneously by virtue of his strong past relations.

In fact, the first minister has proven in the first months of his government that he is capable of managing this dialogue and of leading it toward satisfactory results that have helped to disperse many of the causes of domestic tension. He has been able to do this through the measures that he has adopted, especially in the sphere of responding to a number of unionist and labor demands.

This interview with Maati Bouabid was conducted in two stages: The first was in his suite at a private hotel where he was following closely the conference of the Islamic ministers of foreign affairs and the second at the royal palace in Rabat.

Perhaps the reader will notice the patience of the Moroccan prime minister and his willingness to field a large number of questions dealing with various issues and topics. At the same time, the reader may notice his careful selection of his words, and he did use his skill and his proficiency as a lawyer to express his reservations in answering some delicate questions.

I prepared for the interview by stating that I had many questions in my bag and his answer was: "Let us begin wherever you want. A journalist must be inquisitive."

We Accept No Negotiations Over Our Sahara

[Question] Morocco has reconsidered the previous peaceful strategy which it followed to settle the Sahara issue. This change was noted in the message which King Hassan II addressed to his people on the 8th of last March. The political statement which you made before the Parliament also referred to this change. What are the motives and the causes that made you adopt this change?

[Answer] Your citing his majesty's message of 8 March is in its place, because the message was a comprehensive address that made clear Morocco's past, present and future position. This message has become like a national charter embodying and crystallizing the consensus of the Moroccan people and adjusting our country's position and strategy on this issue.

In fact, our policy concerning the Sahara has not changed but has rather been made clear and precise. Morocco's position is fully clear: We accept no bargaining and we refuse to cede our right to our national soil and to its unity. At the same time, we are working to reduce the tension in peaceful ways.

We should keep in mind that we decided recently to bolster our diplomatic and information strategy because many countries are still unaware of the real

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causes of this tension. We will work with all means to make our cause known. We will also deal with other countries according to their position toward our national cause. We will continue our efforts in this sphere at the various African and international levels. Even though we consider the issue of regaining our Sahara territories a purely domestic issue, we will not follow the course of leaving the seats empty but will bolster our presence in all meetings.

[Question] It is noticed that the concentrated diplomatic efforts exerted so far have not reduced the tension prevailing in the area.

[Answer] Since tension erupted in the area, a number of fraternal and friendly countries and of regional and international organizations have not stopped exerting commendable efforts to put an end to this escalating tension. Morocco has always welcomed these commendable efforts and still believes in their benefit, especially when these initiatives come from well-meaning people and from the supporters of peace and justice.

His Majesty King Hassan II has gotten us theoretically, practically, materially and spiritually accustomed not to be pessimistic and to favor the signs of hope over the elements of despair as long as there are diplomatic efforts on what they call conflict and what we rightfully call fabricated tension.

[Question] Why has the Committee of Wise Men failed so far in setting a date for convening an African summit conference to discuss the Sahara issue? Do you think that the visit made by the Nigerian and Mali presidents to Nonskchott, Algiers and Rabat will produce closer views on the issue?

[Answer] These efforts should not be hastily judged as abortive efforts. The formation of the Committee of Wise Men produced initial psychological results. Moreover, this committee has been confronted with obstacles for which we have not been responsible. The visit made by His Excellency General Obasanjo, the president of Nigeria; His Excellency Moussa Traore, the president of Mali, and by the general secretary of the Organization of African Unity is no doubt within the framework of the mission entrusted to the Committee of Wise Men.

Morocco has expressed to the two presidents its readiness to cooperate fully with this committee. The Moroccan government and people, including the Saharans and their representatives, have expressed their adherence to the irrevocable national unity.

We have great hope that these efforts will produce satisfactory results, especially since the presidents entrusted with this mission by the African summit are well known for their wisdom and their experience. They are confident that the African problems must be solved by the Africans themselves.

In any case, I can refer you to a statement made by the Nigerian president at the end of his tour in which he said: "Our efforts cannot be described as a complete failure or a complete success."



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Issue Is Algeria's Issue

[Question] But why does Morocco refuse to negotiate with the POLISARIO?

[Answer] (The prime minister interrupted me to say) The best name we can give these people is the "JARISARIO" [sic]. (He then went on to say) Our hands have always been open for any negotiation seeking to achieve the unity of the Arab Maghreb peoples so that the Maghreb's economic resources may be utilized jointly. This is what His Majesty Hassan II has said frequently.

I repeat again that I call the so-called POLISARIO the "JARISARIO." The issue is the issue of Algeria. The thing that we ask all the Arab brothers to know is that the Sahara is a Moroccan sahara, that we acquired it legally, that it has always been Moroccan and that we will not cede a single inch of our land. If negotiation means ceding a single inch of the Sahara, then the Moroccan king, government and people can never accept such negotiation. King Hassan II has said that the Moroccan people made their pledge not to cede a single inch of the Sahara during the Green March.

History makes clear the Moroccanism of the Sahara. We regained it legally in accordance with the Madrid treaty. If the negotiations with those who supply the POLISARIO with weapons is to put an end to the border violations or to utilize the resources of the Arab Maghreb, then we will not at all oppose such negotiations, but rather we call for them.

[Question] Observers concerned with the Arab Meghreb affairs say that the recent changes in Mauritania have helped to bring closer the Moroccan and Mauritanian viewpoints concerning the Sahara issue?

[Answer] The changes in government that have occurred in the fraternal Mauritania are, naturally, a domestic issue that concerns a sovereign state. As for the Moroccan-Mauritanian relations, they are firm at both the political and economic levels. These relations proceed fundamentally and in principle on the basis of the single common destiny.

King Hassan II will spare no efforts to bolster these relations and to formulate them within an ideal framework of cooperation and good neighborliness for which his majesty is eager--cooperation which his majesty hopes will prevail in the entire area.

The Moroccan and Mauritanian efforts are consolidated to achieve this goal, and it is within the framework of this goal that the contacts and the consultations are held. The latest visit by brother Lt Col Mohammad Ould Bouceif, the Mauritanian prime minister, to Fez is part of the exchange of opinions and of the constant consultations and dialogue that characterizes the relations between the two fraternal countries. We can congratulate ourselves on the outcome of this visit which will inevitably strengthen the ties that bind us in all the spheres.

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All the attempts to diminish this solidarity and this cooperation are nothing but desperate attempts that will inevitably end in dismal failure.

France Has Bigger Role

[Question] France is being accused, by virtue of its relations with the area's states, of not playing the necessary role to make the movement for peace in the area dynamic.

[Answer] Naturally, France is not a party to the dispute or to the Madrid treaty. But France, along with Spain in their capacity as the two countries formerly colonizing the northwestern part of Africa, is better aware of the dossier of the real Moroccan borders, of the phases of shattering Morocco's territorial unity and of Morocco's legitimate rights. Thus, France has at its disposal all the historical and legal elements that permit it to play a positive role in bringing to an end the fabricated crisis existing in the area.

[Question] It seems that there has been a coup in the Spanish policy toward the Sahara issue in favor of Algeria and the POLISARIO in the wake of the visit made by Adolfo Suarez, the Spanish prime minister, to Algeria. Do you have any inclination to cancel your agreements with the Spanish government if this turns out to be true?

[Answer] Perhaps the word "coup" is bigger than the basic position. The thing that I personally know and that all others know is that Spain signed the Madrid treaty and that our [presumably meaning its] National Council approved it and thus Spain became committed to this treaty at both the bilateral and international levels. The Spanish officials have stated on frequent occasions that they abide by this treaty.

Morocco is currently present in the Sahara in accordance with an international ruling made by the International Court of Justice and in accordance with a trilateral agreement signed by Morocco, Mauritania and Spain in response to the wishes of the members of the Jemaa, which Spain always considered the true representative of the Sahara inhabitants.

As I have already said, our relations with other states are not established on the basis of circumstances. Moreover, our judgement of positions should not derive its elements from circumstantial positions.

[Question] So, where does the road to peace in the area start, in your opinion?

[Answer] The road to peace is clear. But paving this road is what requires efforts. This means that our national sovereignty and our territorial unity must be respected so that cooperation and solidarity may replace tension and conflict, and so that we may devote our efforts seriously to building the foundations of the greater Arab Maghreb. This is not inaccessible for the peoples of Morocco, Algeria and Mauritania that are bound by the ties of religion, blood, neighborliness and common struggle.

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[Question] It has been reiterated that the Soviet Union has offered to supply Morocco with the weapons and military equipment that it needs. Is there anything to prevent Morocco from accepting this offer, especially if the United States refrains from meeting your demands?

[Answer] Allow me to put your question in a broader framework--the framework of comprehensive cooperation with all countries. Our international relations in all the spheres emanate from three bases: Our national sovereignty, our vital interests and the nonalignment for which our foreign policy has been known since we gained our independence. In our general policy, we work ceaselessly to realize the element of balance in our international relations as a principle. Therefore, we prefer to evaluate these relations on the basis of their ultimate total outcome rather than the basis of their partial beginnings.

[Question] Why does not the United States meet all of Morocco's requests for defensive weapons?

[Answer] My reply to this question is the same previous reply, because I consider this question complementary to the preceding one.

Morocco Committed to Rabat Summit

[Question] And now permit me, Mr Prime Minister, to move to the number one Arab issue. I have heard from diplomatic circles that Morocco agreed with King Husayn during his latest visit to Morocco to exert efforts to bring the Middle East issue back to the United Nations.

[Answer] The position of the king, government and people of Morocco toward the sacred Arab issue has been clear since the beginning and it is based on the principles approved by the Rabat summit of 1974.

Proceeding on the basis of the Rabat conference resolutions and in light of the principles behind these resolutions, Morocco has held and continues to hold contacts with its Arab brothers at the various levels. Proceeding on the basis of these same resolutions, Morocco has defined and continues to define all its positions on the Arab arena. Morocco has not at all swerved from these resolutions as the principles of its Arab policy.

In the light of this position, we found ourselves at the Baghdad conference and after it in full agreement with all the Arab countries that seek to achieve a comprehensive peace based on Israel's withdrawal from the occupied territories, especially from Jerusalem, and recognition of the national rights of the Palestinian people who are represented by the PLO. Our relations with Egypt are subject to the same criteria.

[Question] President al-Sadat has said that Morocco is the party that prevented the Egyptian delegation's participation in the conference of the Islamic ministers of foreign affairs which was held in Fez recently.

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[Answer] Morocco is a hosting country and we received messages from Syria, Iraq, Libya and the PLO asking that the Egyptian delegation not participate. Being a host country, Morocco had no power to accept or not accept the Egyptian delegation. We referred the messages to the General Secretariat of the Islamic Conference Organization and this secretariat is the side that took the decision.

[Question] It seems that your relations with Syria have begun to improve after the tension that they experienced recently.

[Answer] We always wish that our relations will be good and based on clarity, mutual respect and non-intervention and non-meddling in internal affairs, especially our relations with our brothers in the Arab East--particularly Syria, on whose Golan Heights pure Syrian and Moroccan blood mingled.

Haddad...(Bouhmara)

[Question] How do you view the situation in Lebanon in the wake of the declaration of the so-called "Free Lebanon" by turncoat Maj Sa'd Haddad?

[Answer] The malicious goals and the base ends sought by the evil elements responsible for the Lebanese civil war are now very obvious. I mean by these goals and ends shattering the unity of this peaceful country and achieving Israel's expansionist ambitions through some mercenary elements that are subservient to Israel.

I would like to bring back to mind here a phase of our history. The fifth columns that preceded colonialism succeeded at times in buying some agents and encouraged them to stage rebellions against the central government with the aim of creating troubles and sowing sedition in preparation for the colonialist march.

One such agent was a person known as (Bouhmara). His fate was the same as that of all agents and traitors. At the end, (Bouhmara) was seized, put in a cage and taken throughout city streets as an example for those who may learn.

Perhaps the question of Haddad in Lebanon is not different from the issue of Bouhmara in Morocco, even though the time, place and name are different. We hope that an end will be put to this tragedy so that security and reassurance may be established throughout the fraternal Lebanon within the framework of territorial unity and the reunion of the various sects and factions.

[Question] It is said that Morocco has decided to withdraw its forces that are present in (Shaba) Province in Zaire.

[Answer] The Moroccan armed forces present in Shaba went there on the request of Zaire's government and head of state. These forces will be withdrawn when Morocco receives a request in this regard. You know that Morocco has placed these forces at the disposal of Zaire as part of the African forces sent there on a decision taken after the Shaba events last year.

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My Government Has Large Majority

[Question] I still have in my bag questions connected with the domestic conditions in Morocco. Why hasn't the USFP [Socialist Union of People's Forces] taken part in your government? Do you think that the USFP's participation in the National Security Council has fulfilled the need to achieve the national coalition?

[Answer] It is known that in accordance with the constitution, the king is the party that appoints the prime minister and the ministers. The present cabinet is a coalition cabinet that has a large majority in the Parliament.

In addition to other parties, the USFP constitutes the opposition which we hope is, and will continue to be, positive and constructive opposition.

As for the National Security Council, which is concerned with certain issues under certain circumstances, its formation reflects the national consensus on the territorial issue.

I Reject Blackmail

[Question] Can you tell us how you have overcome the tense situation experienced by Morocco recently?

[Answer] On the instructions of King Hassan II, we opened a dialogue with all the parties concerned. Ahmed Osman, my predecessor, had started the dialogue. When I came to power, I met with all the trade unions and with businessmen, listened to them and adopted their proposals.

There were reasonable proposals from some trade unions, especially from the UMT [Moroccan Labor Federation] and the UGTM [General Federation of Moroccan Workers]. These two trade unions said that they are aware of the country's financial and economic capabilities and know that raising the minimum wages in the industrial and agricultural sectors would put the country in a difficult situation economically, especially under these conditions that are connected with our national issue. Then they presented their proposals and drew the attention of the officials to take the possible measures.

But the CDT [General Labor Confederation] made demands which I studied with them for more than 4 hours. Ahmed Osman had also studied these demands with them. Before the strike of 10 and 11 April, several arrests had taken place. The confederation's demand was that the unionist detainees be released before the start of the dialogue on the unionist demands. They then said that if the government wanted the trade unions to refrain from staging the strike set for 10 and 11 April, then the government had to commit itself to this and to releasing the detainees in particular. I found that this was a kind of blackmail and that the state had to take a strong stand. Within the framework of a strong state, dialogue is more useful and beneficial. I said to them: I, as an official, will not adopt any decision now under the pressure of the unions and of the blackmail in which you are engaging. It is impermissible to declare a strike while the dialogue is going on.

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They thought that the government had disintegrated to the point where it could not take any measure. So we adopted the necessary measures. They were not vengeful or malicious measures but ones that proved that the government was in the best state. The measures we adopted were within the bounds of the law. We expelled a number of people responsible for the strikes in accordance with the law. It is a very painful thing to see people pushed to commit acts of violating law and order by exploiting these people's living conditions. The persons responsible can thus expose such people to strict sentences. They thought that they would seize power. Yes, it is with such simplicity that they pushed the people.

Morocco is proud of being an active member in the international community and in the international organizations. It is also proud that it is foremost among the developing countries that act in accordance with the democratic principles and that respects the rights of individuals and of groups within the limits of the law.

However, it is natural and even essential that the individual and collective democratic liberties remain compatible with the requirements of responsibility in all the philosophical, political and moral sense of the word 'responsibility.'

As for the civil servants who had problems with their departments or with the judiciary--and the courts in Morocco are independent of the executive government agency--their problems are the result of their failure to respect this fundamental principle.

Civil Servants Have No Right To Strike

[Question] Don't you think that striking is a legitimate right of the worker's?

[Answer] The constitution says something definite. The right to strike is legitimate for all. Yes, but the right to strike will be codified insofar as the civil servants are concerned. There is the basic civil servants law that prohibits striking.

Some people imagined that the state had reached a far degree of disintegration and so they pushed the people to become victims. I will say it again, this is painful. I can tell you that the first act I will carry out after answering the Parliament is that I will start codifying the right to strike for all.

The constitution, to which all resort, stipulates the presence of an executive agency, a legislative agency and a judiciary agency. We have an administrative judiciary that has said repeatedly that this government or that department made an oppressive decision and then proceeded to abolish the decisions.

If the decisions we have made are oppressive, the Court of Cassation or the Higher Council can say that these decisions are unjust and oppressive. We will then abide by the court's decisions.

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I believe in democracy and I will defend freedom to the end. I have spent 20 years defending liberties and democracy. Now that I occupy this position of responsibility, I will never act against freedom and will never become an oppressive man. But I will say once more: Freedom and democracy do not mean chaos. If chaos erupts, then may democracy rest in peace, because chaos brings the opposite of what the others expect. It brings dictatorship.

Let Them Resort to Courts

[Question] What about the detainees?

[Answer] The courts have only issued detention sentences. They have also found numerous people to be not guilty. As I have already told you, there is a Higher Council with an administrative chamber that is concerned with the administrative cases. Any civil servant can resort to this chamber and say that such and such a minister or the government has decided to expel me. I believe that the decision is unjust and I demand that it be abolished. The administrative chamber has already abolished several decisions taken by certain departments.

[Question] Have any of the people expelled submitted such a petition?

[Answer] The truth is that I do not know.

[Question] Some opponents and observers have described your decisions to raise the wages as a patchup operation seeking to safeguard the continued interests of the foreign and local capital.

[Answer] First and before anything else, I would like to tell those who say this that a patchup operation would be of no use to capital, by the admission of Carl Marx himself. But if we view these measures from the angle of the broad masses who have benefited from them, than all the measures were taken on the strength of the requirements of the needy groups and in response to the wishes of the majority.

I can say that the impact of these measures at the popular level has been positive and calls for pride. If the economic resources permitted offering more, the government would not hesitate to offer more. The Moroccan people deserve, as King Hassan says, all the good in the world. The eye is discerning but the hand cannot reach out far enough. So, what can we do, especially since Morocco, as you know, is facing challenges, and must possess the means to confront them.

We Will Watch Prices Carefully

[Question] But if the state does not interfere to control prices, the wage increase that you have declared will not greatly improve the living standard of people with limited incomes, especially since the private sector has the full freedom to set the prices. Inflation will thus consume any wage increase.

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[Answer] The government is fully determined to fight inflation and all forms of illegal hoarding of commodities. It is also determined to confront monopolization and will not hesitate to adopt the firmest deterrent measures possible against all opportunists and all those who tamper with the people's livelihood.

[Question] There remains a final question. You have announced that you will reconsider some of the existing economic structures. Can we know the broad lines of your government in this regard?

[Answer] Re-examination of the existing economic structures requires time, as you know. I have not yet completed my second month in the prime minister's seat. I think that you agree with me that this is not a sufficient period to carry out such work even though I have general ideas and principles on the issues. Until I can give you a detailed view, I will leave this issue for another opportunity, God willing.

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MOROCCO

MOROCCO CRITICIZED FOR LACK OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

Paris AFRIQUE ASIE in French 11-24 Jun 79 p 17

[Article by Ali Gharbi: "Justice, Nothing More!"]

[Text] There are concepts which stop one short. Those put forth to the international press by Hassan II, in connection unfortunately with the visit paid to Morocco by Charles Andre Julien are of that kind. He calmly compared the "Islamic" justice of Khomeyni with the "justice, nothing more," which he seeks to provide in his kingdom.

One would think one was dreaming. Barely a month has elapsed since the death of secondary school student Mohamed Grina, following torture by the royal police. For 20 years, political prisoners have been crowded into prison cells and sometimes die there, for lack of care. Hundreds of persons have disappeared: militants like Hussein el-Manouzi, 200 Saharans carried off after the "green march" and a hundred military officers and officials involved in two coups d'etat.

Those who are fortunate enough to be working have just been given a gift by the government of a supplement of 50 centimes per hour (2 or 3 francs a day, a hundred francs a month). The interoccupational minimum growth wage has in fact been increased from 1.40 to 1.90 dirhams.

One must also linger over what the recent surveys (see the periodical LAMALIF for March-April) tell us about the real content of "social justice" in Morocco.

In the relatively privileged urban sector, 33 percent of the households (estimated to include five or six persons) live in a single room, 37 percent in two rooms, while 48 percent of the households lack running water, 33 percent have no kitchen, 32 percent have no electricity, and 18 percent have no toilet facilities.

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As to the children of the people--one could almost speak of a people of children, since half of the population is under 15 years of age--the justice to which they are entitled is quite simply heinous.

In this year of the child and in a country where an international congress on childhood was held a few weeks ago in Tangiers, the infant mortality rate is the highest in the world: 150 per thousand in the rural sector, 100 per thousand in the urban sector.

Kwashiorkor, an illness caused by nutritional lacks, can be seen in all the hospitals. The spectre of it hovers over a number of regions in Morocco where there is no medical care. Additionally:

There is a school enrollment rate of 50 percent, and one child out of two has had no schooling at all;

There is a 50 percent failure rate in the primary schools and a dropout rate of 17 percent. Only one child out of three is promoted to the secondary level; and

There is a loss of 50 to 60 percent of the enrollment during secondary schooling. And, in conclusion, only 20 percent of the bacalaureate candidates pass the examination.

This examination was a public scandal this year more than in earlier ones: The leaks of examination material were so extensive from one end of the country to another that the subject matter was written on the blackboards before the examinations began. It was available in the markets for a hundred francs.

All the rejects from the school system--the vast majority--are subject to shameful child labor exploitation.

A hundred thousand children are working today in the city of Casa Blanca alone. However, this does not prevent this population between 15 and 19 years of age from suffering from the highest rate of unemployment in the country: 33.7 percent.

The rapid, maddening increase of abandonment of newborn babies, juvenile delinquency, runaway children, the use of the most miserable, but nonetheless harmful drugs (wax polish, plastics, gasoline) draw the picture of the despair of the young people in the kingdom of Hassan II.

And that is the life of the people and the opportunities in life offered the children in Morocco!

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"Justice, nothing more"? One can judge the value of these words when they are spoken in the luxury of the palaces in Fes, Rabat, Cassablanca, Marrakesh and Agadir by a king who is at the same time the richest landowner in the country, a producer and exporter of citrus fruits, avocados, flowers. He is also the owner of a hunting property of 1,500 hectares of good land in Chaouia, where pheasants and gazelles today.

Such words would mean the condemnation of the regime if he were not sustained and supported by imperialist interests and provided with military and financial aid by France. And also, it must be said, if he were not supported by all of those who are willing to guarantee him by the weight of their moral and intellectual authority.

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TUNISIA

DESTOURIAN CAMPAIGN AGAINST AL-QADHDHAFI DENOUNCED

Paris AFRIQUE-ASIE in French 11-24 Jun 79 p 13

[Article by Fathi Abdallah: "The Crusade"]

[Text] Away with Al-Qadhdhafi! This is the most civil form of attack used in Tunisia against the neighboring colonel to the east. Nouri confides in private, so that no one will be unaware of it, that a "danger" threatens him from the east. To make matters very clear, he even went to Medenine, gathered his officers together and, by means of discreet little touches, gave the "peril" a precise form.

Others prefer to go back to an old clash of arms almost a year ago to justify the claims of a provocative editorial. Even Mohamed Masmoudi, the "Libyan" thanks to whom Tunisia has suffered so many misfortunes, has entered the fray, pointing an accusing finger at the man whom he credited, not so long ago, with all the virtues of revolution and united Arab patriotism.

What a strange crusade and what a strange alliance of ministers, the regime, and breaking the ban, in order in a single voice to denounce, to warn, to alert, to advise about the "nuisance of a Libyan neighbor."

It is true that Al-Qadhdhafi and his regime have never enjoyed the favors of the Tunisian political class. Except when opposition members of the government or businessmen have gone to ask for them. On such occasions, a few dollars more.

Dispute and Machiavellianism

Does he perhaps cause them to despair? Does he perhaps disturb their moral and intellectual calm a bit too much? Does he perhaps in the end fail to fit into their framework of a "responsible and moderate" chief of state? It hardly matters, and in any case our intention is not to resolve this mystery.

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But the strange thing is that this anti-Al-Qadhdhafi campaign in the press, both government--or government affiliated--and "opposition," is so gratuitous that one cannot help but look for a sleeping partner elsewhere than in Tunis.

There is not--or there is not any longer for the moment at least--any dispute about the continental shelf between the two countries, as far as is known, nor any "hasty merger" which would justify such virulence. Well, then? Unless the Tunisian "friends" of Al-Qadhdhafi and his enemies, reconcile for once at his expense, have taken up something which came from elsewhere. And unless that elsewhere is France. For how can one fail to note the similarity between what is said in Paris about the Libyan president and his Arab and African policy, his Islam and his social projects, and what is reiterated in Tunis, often in the same phrases? Machiavellianism, it is being said, has been pushed to the point--doubtless due to an excessive deal--of pushing into the hands of the colonel a presumed sentimental affair drafted in the most knowledgeable Tunisian police laboratory of political action. Along with, obviously, carefully planned leaks and the necessary "pipelines" to a subsidized press. Do you know Miss Henayen? Hedi Nouira, surely!

It is being murmured in Tunis that the lynching throughout the Libyan colonel's ranks cannot fail to have an effect on Tunisian domestic policies. It is even being claimed that the attack on Al-Qadhdhafi today defines the line of division between those who can lay claim to "dialogue" with Nouirs, Sayah, Farhat and company, and those who will be forever excluded from it. One must be critical of Qadhdhafi to be able to sit down at the gaming table with the princes who govern in Tunis. Ethics--the Masmoudi case--doesn't pay here, it is true, but ambition sometimes finds combinations which even the cleverest mathematicians do not yet understand.

Particularly since Nouira must deal with what he has! An illuminating story is circulating in Tunis about his recent altercation (the word is perhaps a bit strong for this submissive character, but we use it nonetheless) with the "supreme combatant." Which nonetheless earned him a "sulking session" abroad with the princess, as if there were not enough places to go and sulk in Tunisia.

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\* The organ of Mr Mestiri's liberals, AL-RA'Y, has also joined in the campaign to discredit the Libyan leader. The popular Union Movement (MUP), sponsored by Mr Ahmed Ben Salah, refused to participate in this maneuver which can only serve the interests of the enemies of the Arab cause and encourage Al-Sadat's propaganda designed to prepare the public for an attack on the Jamahiriya.

\*\* Nouira is prime minister, Sayah is head of the Destourian Party, Farhat is minister of national defense, and Masmoudi is a former minister of foreign affairs.

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When he attempted to present a proposal of amnesty to the president of the republic, Bourguiba stiffened suddenly and his jaw tightened: "But this is politics here. Since when do you decide political matters?" An embarrasse murmur from Nouira, who had definitely thought that after 10 years in "power" he would be taken seriously. Then a paternal Bourguiba, speaking as if to an errant adolescent: "Stay out of politics, concern yourself with administration. That's the only reason you're there." Suddenly, he was in a corner. That did not prevent him from continuing and acting on an order from Bourguiba in Paris--where the president had gone "for dental care"--calling for the release of 263 trade union members illegally kept in prison for more than a year. This measure was fraudulently represented as an "amnesty" by the Tunisian press.

Friend Farhat, for his part, helpful fellow that he is, is setting out his military markers--for whatever need may arise. Although the man being wished "long life" all along the columns has apparently recovered (he does not even need his cane anymore for his daily walks) a cautious man is always two others. On "J" day, it would be well to be in good company. And finally the inevitable Sayah continues to urge faith on the part of the shoddy Destourian ranks (that is Nouira's opinion), the motive force of which has drained away. From cell meeting to cell meeting, he is making preparations for the congress.

Diverse concerns but a common (foreign) enemy. Excellent ingredients for a diversion.

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TUNISIA

PRPT SECRETARY GENERAL DESCRIBES ORDEAL IN PRISON

Paris AFRIQUE-ASIE in French 11-24 Jun 79 pp 14-16

[Article by Zine El-Medkhouri: "I Accuse"]

[Text] It is a poignant report which AFRIQUE ASIE offers its readers on an exclusive basis today. It is a letter written by a Tunisian militant, Zine El-Medkhouri, known as "Abbas," who is secretary general of the Revolutionary Party of the Tunisian People (PRPT), a movement opposing the Destourian Party, from the cell where he has been incarcerated since August 1977. It is a letter addressed to the "Friends and Comrades" in the Third World, the West, and in particular, in France, where he and his wife, Annie, lived and studied.

This horrifying account of which we are publishing lengthy extracts need no commentary. It is the story of the torture suffered after his arrest nearly two years ago, in the jails of the Supreme Combattant, the man who firmly committed himself when he took power almost a quarter of a century ago to respect for the rights of men.

But the Tunisian torturers, trained in specialized schools in France and the United States, continue as in the past to pursue, arrest, torture and massacre all those who, in Tunisia and outside the national territory, rise up against the bloody repression imposed upon their people, against those who denounce the policy of personal power within the country and alignment with imperialism abroad.

In principle, Zine El-Medkhouri was to be tried on 5 June. Indeed!

When I was arrested, they were very happy. This was a good catch, "a big fish," for them. My calvary began in military vehicle which took me from Kalaat es Senane to Tadjerouine, when one of them asked me how the "weather in Algeria" was when I left, and I answered that it was fair. They began to poke me in the sides with their elbows and to spit in my face. My hands were secured behind me, and the manacles were tight and cut my wrists. This continued until we reached Tadjerouine, where they switched me to another vehicle, outside the town in the dark of the night. From there I was taken to a two-story villa near the Djendouba National Guard post, and the infernal cycle of questions and blows all over the body continued.

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My hands were still secured behind me. There were a dozen of them, three of them completely drunk. This was during Ramadan, and I was thirsty and hungry: I had been given nothing to eat or drink since my arrest. I was bleeding and so was my comrade. Toward 1000 hours the DST [Directorate of Territorial Surveillance] arrived from Tunis. One of them, an officer named Mohamed Hadji, almost killed me while loading his pistol opposite me. They tossed me into a white Volkswagen at their feet, so that I would not see the road, and they told me that it was now or never that they would get rid of me, for they were covered and they had orders to make me talk at all costs, and that if I should die they would only be my executioners. They had tape recordings of telephone orders to justify them. Moreover, if I died no one would know, and what I would undergo would make me regret I was ever born. They said that only fools or yoga veterans could survive what was awaiting me. Later, I found that they were not bluffing.

In Tunis, I was taken to the second floor of the Minister of Interior. I spent the first three days standing, without food or drink. I will not detail the thirty-seven days I spent there, but this was the daily agenda. In the morning, I lay stretched out in a cell without a bed. With me, in this cell, there were always two uniformed agents and a noncommissioned officer. They were relieved every six hours and they had chairs to sit on. A huge bare bulb lighted the cell 24 hours a day. They did not let me sleep more than an hour at a stretch. In the afternoon, they took me to the office of Mohamed Hadji on the fourth floor, where they asked me questions interspersed with insults, spitting in my face, slaps, blows with their fists and kicks to my legs. At 1900 hours--they were real night owls, the bastards--they came back to get me for the torture which lasted sometimes until 0400 hours. This is what it involved.

I was naked, hands and feet tied up, and a rod was passed behind my knees and elbows. The bar was raised and my extremities rested on the edges of two tables. This was called the helicopter: the body balances, maintained solely by the tendons of the knees suspended from the bar. They threw buckets of water on me. My head hung down, the veins in the neck swelled with blood and my feet got no blood. They put on a record, or stuffed a filthy cloth in my mouth, pushing on my chest so that I would swing until I fainted or my nose began to bleed. Then they put me down, threw water on me to awaken me, and began again, slapping the soles of my feet with a pick-axe handle or a piece of hose. There were three who took turns: Abdelali Hab Hab, Bechir Saidi and one other. Mohamed Hadji and a man named Mohsen supervised the operation. When my feet swelled and began to split, they made me walk in the water and then began again.

They held a very sharp pencil just in front of my eyes, and while my two hands were secured behind my head, they began to strike at my knees and thighs with a piece of pipe, or stepped on my toes. I had to tolerate it without moving because if I had, the point of the pencil would have put out an eye.



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They extinguished their cigarettes against my lips in order, they said, that I could "not kiss women any more or make speeches."

They spread my legs, while my hands were secured behind my head, and beat my genitals with a rubber pipe. "Ten blows for every time you made love to Annie." They wanted to make me pay for the years I had spent in France with my wife. I spent more than three months with my genitals swollen with pus and bleeding, trying to treat myself with herbs my mother brought me.

They stepped on my toes with their shoes, while at the same time others twisted my fingers and pulled my hair, banging my head against the wall to drive me crazy.

They tried to force a huge, very sharp drawing pencil up my anus.

They forced me to balance a chair on my head, while standing on one foot. If I wavered and the chair fell, they rained blows upon me.

Dear friends, this schedule lasted for thirty-seven days. I was coughing and spitting blood and could no longer walk: they dragged me. They made some comrades confess just by showing them the condition I was in. They signed statements admitting to things they had never done. Here I can only recount the main things. I cannot tell you everything, it is too revolting. It would take a whole book to describe it. I tried to kill myself, but I was too weak and could not. The investigating judge wanted me to confess and say I was sorry for what I had done. I said that I had never asked anyone for pardon except my mother and my friends, for the pain and trouble I had caused them, and that I had no regrets, that it was for the government to ask pardon of me for the evil done to me. He authorized the DST to come and get me any day, at will, until the month of March 1978. The men came to the prison from time to time to fetch me, and brought me back in the evening. To this day, I am still in the hands of the investigating judge.

Well, here in prison it is as horrible as at the DST. They do not beat me, but they have other means and time on their side. Here they classify me as "special." The "special prisoners" are the dangerous ones, and they must not be allowed to come in contact with the other prisoners. They are "contagious," as they say. Their goal is to destroy us morally and ruin us physically. The director of the prison, Mahmud B, told me that he would crush me like a cockroach. Colonel Sadok Znaidi, the director of penitentiary administration, told my mother and me that it is a question of honor between him and me which of us will break first. They wanted me to ask the chief of state for pardon and to promise to "settle down," something I cannot do without betraying myself.

Suddenly I was transferred to E Wing, which is called "khabaah el'abra," or the exemplary wing. It is reserved for those under sentence of death. This was to affect my morale. Since I have been here I have seen two executions--one of the prisoners was 20 years old, and a very sympathetic fellow. At

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the beginning I spent three-and-a-half months in isolation in a bare wet cell measuring two meters by three. I saw no one and they took me out to walk for 15 minutes every 24 hours all alone in a small courtyard with high walls. I was given and I still get my food in a plastic dish, since glass and metal are forbidden me. Even the little metal filter in my pipe was taken from me. Through a window, they hand me a bowl of broth with two or three small chunks of rotten cabbage and carrot. As meat, I am entitled to big white grubs. I also have 250 grams of dry black bread each day. The jailer can inspect the cell through a little spy hole at any moment. If my mother sends me food, they taste it and change the recipient before giving it to me. For medicine, there is nothing but aspirin tablets to treat every ill. My mother sends me medicine for my ailments, but I must battle and suffer punishment each time to get them. They strip me completely naked and search everywhere before and after I see my lawyer or my mother. These visits take place in an isolated room with a head guard present.

Once I showed my mother the bruises from blows on my body. The next day the DST came to get me to give me a beating. I was not supposed to do that. My comrades and I went on a hunger strike to protest my detention in isolation. Then they put us three to a cell for eight months, and conditions remained the same. Later, they put us all together in a large room, and things improved a little but whenever something happened, it was I who paid the price. By means of a hunger strike, we demanded the improvement of the conditions of our detention--I, three comrades and five common law prisoners. They put us all in the dungeon, which is a black tunnel full of excrement which one reaches by a stairway leading 21 steps down. We wore filthy, torn uniforms, without undershirts or shorts, shoes or socks or cigarettes. We were in the blackest darkness, surrounded by excrement, our feet chained to iron rings in the floor by heavy chains 30 centimeters long. We saw to our needs where we sat, where we slept. The tunnel sloped a little and an ocean of filth formed at the bottom. As a special precaution, I had been chained at that end, directly to a ring sunk in the floor so that I could not even get up or change position. We were entitled to three liters of water and nine little black rolls every 24 hours, for the nine persons shut in the dungeon.

## Strangulation

We were on a hunger strike all nine days we spent in this dungeon. When they took us out, my whole body and above my more private parts were covered with disgusting pimples, and my eyes would not stop running. Now I could no longer tolerate the light. Afterward they put me in F Wing, room 1, with the worst bandits. We were packed in together, with a single toilet and one small faucet for all. One had to wait for a quarter of an hour to urinate in the morning. We took our "walk" in groups of five in the courtyard. Rape and unimaginable things occurred in there. The people were hungry. Organized gangs imposed their law. They raped the younger ones. There was a prisoner boss, and the guards were in connivance....

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Recently I got a letter from Annie and Anne Marie and one Annie P. My morale is not bad. My health is improving--the scabies and the pimples are gone, but I have white hair growing like mushrooms. I also have problems with my blood circulation, above all in my legs, and my teeth are a little loose in my mouth. In brief, things are better. I am regaining strength while awaiting another bout of isolation or punishment. I cannot find words to tell you how much I miss you and how grateful I am for what you have done and are doing for me, my comrades and my people.

I also understand those who have not written. We are but a drop of tears in misery in the ocean of injustice and exploitation throughout the world. But one must not underestimate the role a letter or a postcard can play. It is very important. Naturally this will not get us released. They say that a fly in the soup doesn't kill, but does produce vomiting. These people here are of the same ilk as that old Pakistani veteran who had Ali Bhutto executed to show his total contempt for the opinion of all mankind.

Before concluding, here are two true little tales.

The first happened in the month of October 1978 in D Wing. A soldier who deserted was arrested. They really fixed him. With the complicity of two guards, some prisoners attempted to sodomize him. He fought and began to scream. They took him to a cell and left him with a dangerous maniac, who immediately began to beat him. He screamed all night, and no one could sleep. The screaming did not cease until morning: the soldier was dead, strangled, and now the maniac is awaiting trial. The family was not allowed to see the body. I knew this miserable little soldier well. He lived on Sebka Street in Tunis.

Here is the second story. There is a fellow here who had an altercation with someone in a bar in Tunis one day and pitched a bottle of beer at the other fellow. But that damn bottle, instead of hitting his adversary's head, missed him and shattered into smithereens against a framed photograph of the president hanging on the wall. The police came and took the fellow away. He told them that it was too bad about the photograph and that it should never of been in the bar in the first place. He got six months on the prison farm for "attempted assassination of the president in a photograph."

But there are some bastards, bad jokers, in prison, and they told him this was unfair and advised him to appeal. Like an idiot he appealed, and the appellate court increased his sentence by six more months. This makes a whole year he gets to sleep on a straw mat.

Well, I greet and embrace you all. Your friend, brother, colleague and comrade, Zine El-Medkhouri.

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TUNISIA

FATE OF LONG-TERM PRISONERS DESCRIBED

Paris JEUNE AFRIQUE in French 27 Jun 79 pp 17-20

[Article by Abdelaziz Dahmani: "Political Prisoners in Tunisia"]

[Text] In Tunisia, the prisons are occupied not only by the labor unionists who were arrested after last year's worker uprising. Political prisoners--some of them since 1968--continue to serve sentences of between 10 and 20 years of imprisonment, if not at hard labor. Because they were considered Maoists or leftists at the time, those who are called members of the "Perspectives" Group keep languishing in the jails amid almost general indifference. Their families are mounting a publicity drive but hardly anybody hears them. A noisy campaign is doing the Tunisian prisoners more harm than good. Too many demands entail the risk of delaying their release. And so, the circle is closed tight again: discretion leads to forgetfulness; but the latter often serves as an alibi. For the jailers, of course.

There are six of them who, down through the years, have become veteran Tunisian political prisoners although they are only between 35 and 40. Ahmed Ben Othman Raddaoui, a university student, by himself managed to pile up 22 1/2 years in sentences (he has served nine so far). He has 13 years left to serve to the end of his sentence. Nourreddine Ben Kheder, an economist, and Gilbert Naccache, an agricultural engineer, are half-way through a 17-year sentence. Rached Bellalouna, an urban development expert, likewise has been in jail for more than eight years. He has 4 1/2 years left to serve. Mohamed Salah Fliss and Abdallah Rouissi, both teachers, each have served half of their 10-year sentence. Held at Borj Erroumi, in the northern part of the country, these men are not dangerous criminals. They are extreme left-wing intellectuals who subscribe to a mixture of Trotskyism and Maoism, known in Tunisia during the sixties under the name of "Members of the Perspectives Group."

During 20 years of independence, Tunisia had a certain number of political trials. Most often they involved young people, college students,

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intellectuals, labor unionists of all kinds, in all walks of life and with different ideologies (communists, Ba'thists, Muslim Brethren). These trials invariably revolve around Article 8 of the Constitution which with superb ambiguity proclaims: "Freedom of opinion, of the press, of publication, of assembly, and association are guaranteed within the framework of the law." Generally, the accused considered only the first part of this article and the judges only the second part.

In practical terms, things are hardly any simpler. The authorities often cite "reason of state" to hinder those ideas, "imported ideologies," and those freedoms from constituting a snowball and threatening the established order.

The accused in these political trials came from outside or inside the single party which, according to the moment and the circumstances, is more or less rigid or more or less tolerant. Thus, stiff and sometimes unjustified sentences were rather unexpectedly wiped out by strong remittance of sentence or by presidential pardons. All of this makes the long and painful detention of the six "Members of the Perspectives Group" incomprehensible; they were sentenced twice, in 1968 and then again in 1974.

"Hostages?" "Forgotten men?" Dissidents, rather, advocating ideas which are no longer in vogue, without powerful protectors abroad such as the dissident Soviet Jews. It is certain that their purposes and their writings were excessive, intolerant, and provocative. But they were made to pay a price that was entirely too high, way out of proportion to the seriousness of the crime. They were turned into martyrs. The situation is shaping up as a test of strength between a powerful, well-organized government machine and a handful of bare-handed individuals. The latter should bow to the former and ask for pardon. But their pride prevents them from doing that even though they know that their ideas no longer represent anything more than a marginal current.

Fortunately for them, a handful of faithful followers and relatives keep helping them tenaciously. Some do so quite discreetly and others do so with some noise. Untiringly, they go from door to door with the hope of securing their release. But one may wonder whether these little campaigns "demanding their immediate release" did not complicate the matter or postpone the prospects of that release--provided of course they have not just become alibis.

In the Borj Erroumi prison, the political detainees are completely isolated from the common-law prisoners who serve sentences of more than 10 years at hard labor. In mid-May 1979, the politicals were 33, including our 6 "veterans." With a few rare exceptions, they lived two to a room. All of them are fed at the expense of their families at the rate of 15 dinars (F160) per prisoner, paid through a monthly group draft of 500 dinars. That does not include the food parcels, the laundry, and the books which authorized relatives bring them twice a month. A year ago, those prisoners

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went on a 20-day hunger strike to secure an improvement in their living conditions.

Presently, they are entitled to receive some local newspapers, such as L'ACTION, AL-AMAL, LA PRESSE and DIALOGUE. They can also watch Tunisian television programs with the help of two sets purchased by the families and allowed by the prison administration.

With their books, they have put together a good library and they sometimes read works sent from Paris which are not yet in the Tunis bookstores. But censorship is on guard and certain works are rejected, such as the best-seller "L'Orchestre rouge"--the work "red" having been deleted by the censors. The prisoners try to study together as best they can. Above all, law and foreign languages (particularly English and Italian). Soccer is their big passion and the exploits of the Tunisian team in Argentina, during the world championship games, were greatly celebrated. The group has its own writer, Gilbert Naccache, whose many novels are being read, commented on, and criticized as if in a literary club.

Their main preoccupation remains health, which is shaken in every possible way, not including the lack of space and the cramped exercise area. They have kidney and dental problems and their hair falls out. Bellalouna is afraid that he has an ulcer. They are most afraid of getting sick on Saturday or Sunday. On those days, Mr Abdessalem Chetmi, the prison warden, a man they consider correct, little inclined toward zealotry, takes off for the weekend. Since he is the only one who can make decisions, his absences sometimes are very unpleasant.

Were they tortured? According to their witness testimony, the latest torture goes back to 1974, for all of the prisoners, with a prolongation of several sessions for Ben Othman in 1975. Then there is Ben Kheder, who was severely interrogated in March 1978 for having given his support to the movement of Habib Achour. The former secretary-general of the UGTT (General Union of Tunisian Workers) is today their cell neighbor, although he is deprived of contact with them.

Everything began on a certain Friday, 15 March 1968. About 100 college students were holding a meeting in the school of liberal arts and human sciences. Those young people were demanding the release of Mohamed Ben Jennet, a theology student, sentenced to 20 years at hard labor following the demonstrations and serious incidents on 5 June 1967, the day of the Israeli attack on Egypt and other Arab countries. The meeting was suddenly broken up by a counterdemonstration of students affiliated with the PSD (Destourian Socialist Party), the one and only party. There was a clash and then the police intervened; there was counterviolence and a general strike at the university and other schools.

Was this the almost annual rite of college student highjinks, such as the strikes of 1963, February 1965, and the December 1966 demonstrations?

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In March 1968, arrests were more numerous. And, between 9 and 16 September, 134 accused appeared before the State Security Court, especially established for the occasion 2 months earlier. Where did this severity come from? Essentially from the famous May 1968 of France. Especially so since most of the accused were former residents of the Latin Quarter and President Habib Bourguiba did not want Paris violence to be repeated in his country.

In September 1968, there were communists, Ba'thists, and "Members of the Perspectives Group" in the dock. The latter (including our six prisoners) were given the stiffest sentences. In 1979 one might ask oneself what this "perspectivism" might still mean at a time when we know only too well how Trotskyism and Maoism developed, especially in a Muslim country. All that seems to belong to another time and keeping that group in prison might appear all the more illusory and gratuitous.

At the time there was no justification for the charge of "plotting against the security of the state." In reality, these were nothing but tracts, vehement writings against the regime, clandestine meetings (since these tiny extreme left-wing groups were not recognized). There was also the charge of slander against the president of the republic and the secretary of state for national education. Furthermore, there were charges of slander against foreign political personalities, such as Hubert H. Humphrey, at that time vice president of the United States, and Tran Van Dong, South Vietnamese minister on a visit to Tunisia.

This indeed is ancient history. Especially when one knows that the secretary of state slandered was none other than Ahmed Ben Salah who later on broke with the regime; that the interior minister was Beji Caid Essebsi who likewise dissociated himself. Attorney-General of the Republic Abdelmajid Ben Slama, who called for "utmost severity" and "utmost harshness" in the sentences, likewise changed much, just like Habib Achour who got the workers to go out into the streets to demonstrate against "those lost collegians."

Then they had to go through a second trial in 1974. That also seems long ago. Interior Minister Tahar Belkhodja, whose police were behind the whole affair, in turn joined the ranks of those who asked for less rigidity and more democratic freedoms. Thus everything has changed--for those in authority, as for the members of the "Perspectives" Group. In 1968 however President Bourguiba had referred to them as "revolutionaries in sheep's skin, just in from the Latin Quarter." Was that not already an admission that they were hardly dangerous?

I recently had an opportunity to ask Education Minister Mohamed M'Zali for news about them because a good number among them are teachers and their trials were tied to university troubles. Mr. M'Zali replied: "Last year we again did something with Mr Hedi Nouira. We examined their record. Not a word of repentance. Not the slightest indication capable of producing a thaw and leading to their release."

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Several weeks before this review of their files, they failed to get out of prison. That was on the eve of 1 June 1978. They had been ordered to get their things together and close their suitcases. They had taken their leave of their fellow prisoners when the order was countermanded. In 1976 likewise their release had hung by just a thread.

That finally raises this question: have they become a political football? For whom? And why?

Illegal Detentions?

Nourreddine Ben Kheder and Gilbert Naccache were sentenced to 16 1/2 years of imprisonment in September 1968. Ahmed Ben Othman Raddaoui was sentenced to 12 years; Rached Bellalouna to 11 1/2 years, Abdallah Rouissi and Mohamed Fliss to 2 years. In May 1970, like others, they benefited from a presidential pardon which, in the case of some of them, involved house arrest.

Since university troubles did not stop, Ben Othman Raddaoui was arrested again in September 1971 and Fliss and Rouissi were again arrested in February 1972. There was a new thaw at the end of 1972 and there were more releases. But, several weeks later, Ben Kheder and Naccache were accused of having brought a forbidden newspaper into Tunisia, LE TRAVAILLEUR TUNISIEN. They were sentenced to another year in prison. Bellalouna was arrested in turn in July 1973 for having given shelter to a fugitive who had been sentenced. Then came the arrests of Ben Othman and Rouissi in December.

On 20 April 1974, they learned of the abrogation of the 1970 pardons. Although released in July 1974, Bellalouna several days later was heard to say that he no longer had the benefit of this decree. In August 1974, Ben Othman and Rouissi were slapped with supplementary sentences of 10 years.

Since 1975, these prisoners have tried to show that their arrest was "illegal" because the 1970 pardon was not "conditional." It should purely and simply have canceled the 1968 sentences.

Beyond the legal arguments on both sides remains the human drama represented by these endless detentions.

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WESTERN SAHARA

SAHARA PROBLEM ONE OF MAIN THEMES OF JACA SECURITY SEMINAR

Madrid CAMBIO 16 in Spanish 10 Jun 79 pp 41, 43

/Excerpts/ The meeting which constituted the first public appearance of the Institute for International Issues (INCI) brought together in Jaca, Huesca Province, representatives of 12 European and African countries.

In the absence of spokesmen for the POLISARIO Front--Layachi Yaker, the Algerian delegate, deplored the failure to invite them--Moroccans and Algerians undertook the debate about the former Spanish colony in the Sahara.

Abdallah Leroui, professor of history at the University of Rabat, insisted that his country had entered the Sahara legally and asserted that it had obtained from Spain, by means of the Madrid Agreement, only administrative control of the territory, for it had never lost sovereignty. He noted that, of all the Arab countries, only Algeria and South Yemen had recognized the Democratic Saharan Arab Republic. He discounted the report favorable to the POLISARIO Front issued by the UN mission sent to the territory before Spain withdrew from it, stating that the widespread demonstrations of support for the front had been staged.

According to the historian Laroui /spelled as published/, Morocco views the Sahara conflict not as a war of liberation but rather as a struggle involving commandoes organized by the Algerian Army, although Saharan fighters are used. According to this thesis, the only two antagonists would be Morocco and Algeria.

Algeria Against Morocco

Most of the role played by Yaker, advisor of Presidents Boumediene and Chadli and visible head of Algerian diplomacy, was devoted to refuting this argument and maintaining that the conflict is actually between the Saharan people and Morocco, which has occupied their country against their will.

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To Yaker, it is a matter of an unresolved decolonization problem and of the Saharan people's exercising the right to self-determination, recognized by the United Nations and by the Organization for African Unity (OAU).

The Algerian representative, whose rhetorical skill made him the star of the gathering, described as illegal the agreement which was signed by Spain, Morocco and Mauritania in Madrid in 1975, and which led to the transfer of administrative control of the Spanish colony to those two countries.

The Sahara, A Dangerous Setting

Laroui blundered spectacularly on stating, at one point in the discussion, that the Spanish armed forces had been prepared to turn the Sahara over to Algeria immediately before the "Green March."

Alberto Ballarin, UCD /Democratic Center Union/ senator, chairman of the Senate Defense Committee and vice-president of the INCI, insisted that he name names and furnish concrete evidence. The Moroccan historian acknowledged that he had none, but stated that his assertion was a political fact because the Moroccan people believed it.

Both Diez Alegria, on Spain's part, and Layachi Yaker, speaking for Algeria, vigorously denied the existence of any agreement to that effect.

One of the most interesting statements about the issue was provided by Swiss journalist Arnold Hottinger, the correspondent for the NEUE ZURCHER ZEITUNG in the Arab countries, who compared the Sahara conflict to that in Palestine. In both instances, the "new nation is composed of refugees" who have decided to fight for /their/ *in italics* country. The war is utilized by the political leaders to generate a "new mentality," that of Palestinian or Saharan nationalism.

To Hottinger, the desert war can become prolonged like that in the Middle East and could have similar unfortunate consequences for all the countries involved. Mauritania has already been adversely affected, and Morocco could also suffer in the future, given its difficult internal situation.

The major powers have not shown marked interest in the conflict thus far; but the circumstances could change in the fairly near future if one of the superpowers decided that the POLISARIO situation offered it the opportunity to become involved in local political affairs, as did the Soviet Union in Egypt when it offered weapons to Nasser in 1955. The small desert war could become another setting for a confrontation between the major powers, which could produce unfortunate consequences for the entire Maghreb and for Spain in particular, considering the proximity of the Canaries to the scene of the conflict.

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